

Rediscovering the Joy of Being with God and his People—Week Six

Solitude

With the crowd dispersed, he climbed the mountain so he could be by himself and pray. He stayed there alone, late into the night. Matthew 14:23 MSG

It might seem strange that in this season of unprecedented isolation and loneliness that makes us long to be with others, we are pursuing the practice of solitude. To be sure, solitude necessitates our being alone, but that is *not* the same as being lonely! In fact, Richard Foster says at the beginning of his chapter on solitude that “**Jesus calls us from loneliness to solitude.**” The truth is, the follower of Jesus is never alone—**God is *always* present with us**, but most of the time we are so busy and distracted we pay little attention to his quiet presence and delicate promptings. This is why we need to **deliberately pursue** solitude and create a space without any distractions where we can become more aware of the presence of Father, Son and Holy Spirit and allow God to do his deep work on our soul.

Consider

What is solitude?

Solitude is a place. It is a place in time that is set apart for God and God alone, a time when we unplug and withdraw from the noise of interpersonal interactions, from the noise, busyness and constant stimulation associated with life in the company of others. Solitude can also be associated with a physical place that has been set apart for times alone with God, a place that is not cluttered with work, noise, technology, other relationships, or any of those things that call us back into doing mode. Most important, solitude is a place inside myself where God’s Spirit and my spirit dwell together in union. This place within me is private and reserved for the intimacies that God and I share. What happens between the two of us in that place is not meant for public consumption. It is a place where I can give myself with abandon to the Lover of my soul, knowing that I am completely safe from anyone else’s curious gaze or judgmental glance. Ruth Haley Barton, “Sacred Rhythms”

Pray

Ask God to **alert you** to your need for solitude and to **provide you** with an opportunity to practice solitude this week.

Act

- Look for “little solitude” opportunities among the ordinary experiences of your week— watching the sun rise with your morning cup of coffee, the quiet time when nurse your baby, when you’re alone on your ferry/bus/car ride or walk to work or walking your dog, etc. Quiet your mind and deliberately reorient your whole being toward God and welcome his presence with you. Be completely present to the moment and allow the Holy Spirit to minister to you.
- Identify or create a space inside or outside your home where you can be alone—it could be as simple as a chair in the corner of a room or a bench in your garden. Spend at least 15 minutes of quiet solitude in this space and invite your soul to rest in God’s presence and listen to what he has to say to you. Repeat this practice as often as you can and keep a journal of how God speaks to you during these times.

We are praying for you in your times of solitude as your soul delights in God’s presence!